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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/27): PALESTINIAN DIVISION
REMAINS THE MAIN OBSTACLE

Main Stories:

Israeli plans to expand Maale Adumim settlement east of Jerusalem leads coverage in all dailies. Al-Quds reports that the Israeli Ministry of Interior has recommended annexing 3,000 acres to the settlement. Al-Ayyam's lead story highlights that the plan includes building 6,000 housing units in Maale Adumim. All dailies quote Palestinian Authority presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaynah condemning the plan and accusing Israel of, "intentionally destroying international and American efforts," to move the peace process forward. Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run lead photos showing local and international peace activists near Hebron protesting the expansion of settlements.

Jordanian King Abdullah's U.S. visit continues to capture front-page headlines. All dailies highlight remarks by Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas praising Abdullah's efforts and noting that the King speaks on behalf of all Arabs and Muslims and that the "ball is now in the U.S. court," meaning that the U.S. should exert pressure on Israel regarding the peace process.

Palestinian unity talks in Cairo are front page news in all dailies. The papers warn that the current round of talks will likely be the last attempt by all parties to reach agreement on a new Palestinian Authority (PA) government. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida cites an AFP story quoting "unnamed Palestinian politicians and observers" commenting that PA President Abbas will be forced to think of alternatives should talks fail. Reports suggest that one alternative would be to task current PA Prime Minister Fayyad to form a new government.

Al-Quds front-pages a report citing "leaked information from senior American sources" that the U.S. has reiterated to Israel its insistence on the two-state solution. The report also states that Special Envoy Mitchell emphasized in his last meeting with Israeli officials that President Obama, "does not believe in the economic peace settlement," proposed by Israeli Premier Netanyahu.

Secretary Clinton's visit to Lebanon receives coverage on inside pages. Citing wire stories, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida spotlight Clinton's remarks that the U.S. supports "voices of moderation" in Lebanon and that the U.S. would never sign an agreement with Syria at the expense of Lebanese interests.

All papers report that Israeli authorities closed crossings and "imposed a total siege" on the West Bank and Gaza Strip until the evening of April 29, Israel's Independence Day.

STORIES FROM THE WEEKEND PRESS

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Al-Quds' and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front pages quoted Nabil Abu Rudaynah, spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority Presidency, reacting to statements by Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Leiberman rejecting the principle of land for peace. Abu Rudaynah called the comments, "devastating to the proposals and opportunities provided by the new American administration. He added that the Israeli position demands a "clear and serious" international response, in particular from the United States.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida front paged news that prisoner

exchange negotiations between Hamas and Israel have been postponed. An Egyptian source, quoted in both papers, Israeli officials made it clear to Egypt's Intelligence Chief Sulayman during his recent visit to Tel-Aviv that, "the issue will require some time for the [new] Government to look into the issue, study it, and explore the proposed solutions."

Saturday, April 25, 2009

The dailies reported on remarks by Jordan King Abdullah II of Jordan at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on April 24. Abdullah noted that Israel must choose now whether to integrate into the region or remain isolated and hold Israel and the region hostage to on-going confrontations. The King added that the Arab peace initiative has provided Israel with a plan to take its place "among its neighbors." Also highlighted was Abdullah's call on the U.S. to clear up any ambiguity regarding its support for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1. Talal Ukal of Al-Ayyam writes in "A decision Round, not [more] talks"(4/27): "Overshadowed by an atmosphere of pessimism, or, in the best case scenario, cautious optimism, the fourth round of talks- which could very well be the last in the series of inter-Palestinian dialogue - is scheduled to start [April 27]... The atmosphere that preceded this last round was not positive. Division is deepening and counterproductive actions continue... We see no indication of any change in the parties' positions... Hillary Clinton also repeated in her testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the usual American position of refusing to deal with any government that includes Hamas... Such challenges should be sufficient motivation for all the quarreling parties to forge an agreement as soon as possible, one that would strengthen them when confronting these challenges... and protect the Palestinian people's national interests and goals."

2. Al-Quds publishes an op-ed by Naji Sharab under the title, "No other solution for the Palestinian problem than ending division,"(4/27): "The current Palestinian problem is an internal problem... even though external factors play a significant role... It must be said that there is no alternative [to resolving the internal Palestinian crisis] than to end political division and rebuild the Palestinian political system in order to provide a framework for political consensus and coexistence."

WALLES